WCBW Interview

D.J. (to listeners): Rich Mullins is with us this morning, we welcome Rich to 104.9 FM.

D.J. (to Rich): Hi, Rich.

> *Rich: How are you?*

D.J.: I'm doin' great! You are calling us from Wichita, Kansas today. And you are gettin' ready to make your way to St. Louis, Missouri this weekend. Two big shows at the Westport Playhouse. Ticket sales are goin' great, and people are real excited about seeing you come back to St. Louis. It's been a while.

> *Rich: Yeah. It's been a long time. And I think we've wanted to come back, and it just seems like every time someone has approached us we couldn't do it. And then when we'd say, "Well, how 'bout this date?" they'd say, "Oh wow, that doesn't work." So, it's been a long time, but we've always had a great time in St. Louis, and we're really lookin' forward to bein' there now.*

D.J.: Yeah, you've got a lot of fans here, Rich, and for the folks who are listening this morning who may not know much about Rich Mullins, I **think** you began your career, basically, in **Christian** music anyway, as a songwriter.

> *Rich: Uh huh.*

D.J.: You, of course, penned one of your most famous songs, "Sing Your Praise to the Lord", for Amy Grant, right? And that was a few years ago, wasn't it?

> *Rich: That was years and years ago. (Rich laughs.)*

D.J.: It probably seems like a very long time.

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: That was a great song, and was on her Age To Age record, which, I think, sold a bunch of copies, didn't it?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J. : "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" was one of your biggest songs back in the **early** days. And then, there was a transition period between songwriter and artist. Was that difficult? You know, who came up with the idea that Rich Mullins should be a singer?

> *Rich: Well, I had always done my own stuff and traveled around. Even when I was just **writing** I did a lot of concerts in youth groups and church camps and that kind of thing. I always enjoyed performing, but... I don't know, you take what you get. And I was pretty happy as a writer. I actually **love** to write. So, that was fun. The only problem with just being a writer, is, when other people are lookin' at your stuff to do it, you kind of have to write with that in mind. And when you're an artist, you can be a little more selfish about what you write about. (Rich laughs.)*

D.J.: Right, right, and you're not writing for a certain person, you're writin' for yourself.

> *Rich: Yeah. It's much more fun.*

D.J.: I bet it is. I bet it's a lot more fun. Your World As Best As I Remember It, Volumes 1 and 2 projects included some great songs. Those were some pretty popular records, weren't they?

> *Rich: I think so.*

D.J.: "Step By Step", "Boy Like Me, Man Like You", "Where You Are", "Jacob and Two Women", "Calling Out Your Name", "Sometimes By Step", "Everyman", "The Just Shall

Live", "Growing Young", and, a very interesting song that I have to find out about this morning...

> *Rich: Okay...*

D.J.: "The Maker of Noses". Any particular reason for writing a song about a nose?

> *Rich: Well, that's one of those songs that was kind of a gift, because... you know, we had written almost enough material for two albums. And we recorded most of both albums in one sitting. And it was just a few songs shy. Well, when we had to finish up the second volume, when we had to fill out the ten-song thing, we were, by that time we... you know, you go through periods when you just write like crazy. And then you go through periods when you couldn't write a **shopping** list if you had to. So we, Beaker and I, just, I don't know, we came up with that song right in the studio. And neither of us really thought very much of it. I think what we were trying to approach there is... because we tend to be fairly conservative as Christians, sometimes we become really cynical about anything that's politically correct.*

D.J.: Right.

> *Rich: And, so we always sound like, kind of sour notes, going, "Oh, knock off all the stuff about world peace, and ecology, and racial equality, and equity, and all that kind of thing." And I was kind of going, "But just because I don't think that the politically correct **method** of attaining those things works, I still do **want** peace, whether or not it's gonna happen." And, as a Christian, I think we're called to **work** toward peace. I still wanna see racial equality, even though I don't think that a lot of the ways that the PC's are going about it is really gonna work. So **why** don't we, instead of poo-pooing all these issues, why don't we embrace them in, because of who we are as Christians, rather than just going, "Ah, that's a bunch of craziness."*

D.J.: Well yeah, I think that was God's intention from the beginning, wasn't it?

> *Rich: Yeah, I think it is. And I think that a lot of times, people tend to be **so** reactionary. And so you hear people using **great** ideas in order to promote selfishness and degeneracy. And you tend to react by saying, "Wow, I don't want to have any part of **that**." I think that the answer is to be **pro**active, is to live under the influence of the Spirit, rather than live your life within the boundaries of certain issues.*

D.J.: It is so easy to get wrapped up in those things though, isn't it?

> *Rich: Yeah, it really is, especially for me, because I think I'm a natural bleeding-heart kind of a rabble-rouser kind of guy.*

D.J.: You couldn't tell from your lyrics, I mean, not at all. I hope you take this as a compliment, you know, if you listen to a Rich Mullins project, you notice that the words are very unique. The lyrics are unique, they're **totally** different from anything else you hear in Christian music. Where do you come up with some of these things, Rich?

> *Rich: Well, one thing is, I don't listen to a lot of Christian music. I don't listen to a lot of **pop** music. I think that we tend to really be affected by what we listen to, and you know, what goes in comes out, that kind of thing. So I think, by living in Kansas instead of Nashville, by listening to a lot of traditional music, a lot of classical music, a lot of **that** kind of thing instead of always listening to what's hot on the Christian charts, I think that I have managed to not get sucked into the cliche world.*

D.J.: Yeah, you know, I remember a few years back you were signed by Reunion Records, you started with Reunion. You're **still** on Reunion, right?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: But I remember, a few years back I saw a letter. I was in Christian radio in the mid-eighties, and it was a letter addressed from you, I believe, to the people at Reunion thanking them for their involvement with you, and all that kind of thing. But, you were

wanting to kinda take a back seat to the big **fame** deal, weren't you?

> *Rich: Hmm?*

D.J.: You remember that letter? I remember that letter **vividly**.

> *Rich: Hmm? Well... (He laughs.)*

D.J.: You don't remember it?!!!

> *Rich: No. (still laughing)*

D.J.: (D.J. is now laughing.) You kinda like the fame, huh?

> *Rich: Um, that's funny.*

D.J.: You don't **remember** that letter? I wish I had a copy. In fact, it's probably around here still, somewhere.

> *Rich: Well, you know, I write letters a lot. (He laughs.)*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) Something about playin' in churches and that kind of thing.

> *Rich: Uh-huh...*

D.J.: Where you kinda liked the grassroots type of message, of reaching people, and stuff like that. But if you don't **remember** it, well, we'll just go on then.

> *Rich: (Laughing a lot.)*

D.J.: I'll find it, and if I find it, I'll bring it to you Saturday and **prove** it to ya.

> *Rich: This is a backwards interview. Ordinarily I'm making a reference to something that I've done that the D.J. is going, "Oh, I didn't know about that." (Rich is still laughing.)*

D.J.: I'm gonna find that letter, Rich Mullins, and I'll bring it to you Saturday. But we had asked the listeners to call up with some questions for ya. And these are always the most difficult questions, unless you're asking a question about a letter you wrote about ten years ago. (Rich begins laughing again.) But here's the first question. Are ya ready?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: Solo, But Not Alone tour. What does that mean?

> *Rich: That is the term that we've used when me and Beaker go out, because it's kind of like a solo concert, only there are two of us. So it's like... what it basically means is that I don't have a band with me. And Beaker, pretty much, in the course of a concert plays an accompanying role, so, it's not like we're a duo. I think of us as a duo, but I think the **audience** gets to feeling like, that he's accompanying me. So, it's kinda like I'm by myself, but I have someone with me, too. (Rich laughs.)*

D.J.: Is Beaker that guy on Saturday mornings? The scientist?

> *Rich: A lot of people think he is.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) All right, here's the next question. Are you ready?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: Sometime back, you had said that you were gonna take a break from music and do some studying; and the listener said, "Well, now I see he's on tour. What's the deal?" What **is** the deal?

> *Rich: What's the **deal**? Well, after moving out here to Wichita, I have, in the last three years, I've been a full-time student. I've been carrying seventeen to nineteen hours a semester at Friends University. I had assumed, when I started that course of study, that, I would not have energy enough to keep up any kind of music thing. But, as it turns out, I have more energy than I thought.*

D.J.: So you're still doin' your music?

> *Rich: Yeah, I had just thought, "Wow! I remember when I was in school when I was younger, and I remember that it was pretty taxing. And so, if I go back to school, it pretty much means I'm not gonna be doing the music thing."*

D.J.: So, so you're **smarter** than you thought?

> *Rich: Either smarter or stupider. I'm not sure.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) One of the two. Well, we're glad you're still doin' your stuff, man. Hey, and here's the final question. Mother's Day just passed. This listener wanted to know what kind of gift you got your mom for Mother's Day.

> *Rich: You know... (he begins laughing) my family isn't real **big** on giving gifts. We never... everybody **calls** mom on Mother's Day, but we don't give a lot of gifts out. (He laughs again.)*

D.J.: So, it was a telephone call.

> *Rich: It was... actually it was a telephone call three days late.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) A belated phone call.

> *Rich: This is the... and the wonderful thing about my mom, is that she is very, a very down-to-earth woman. And in a lot of ways, she's one of the most practical people I know. And she never... one of the things I've always enjoyed about **both** my parents is, you know, when I went away to college... and I think part of this is because they had **five** kids instead of just two or three. And when I went away to college, I would go home to visit, or I would call home, and I **never** got the old, "Wow, you never call, you never..." you know, "Why haven't you called earlier?" blah blah blah. I never got all that stuff that a lot of my other friends got from their parents.*
>
> *I think my parents were pretty smart in that, when they were thinkin' through their lives, they kinda went, "Okay, we're gonna have kids in the house for probably about twenty-five years. And when they leave, our lives are gonna go on." And so, even though they were certainly loving, supportive, enthusiastic parents, once we left, they kind of had plans of **their** own. And they were very much caught up in what was goin' on there.*
>
> *You know, they're both real active... or, you know, of course my dad died a couple years ago so he's no longer **as** active in the church as he used to be. But mom continues to be active there, and my grandmother lives right next door, and my uncle lives next door, and my grandma's in her nineties. They take care of her. So, they have a pretty thriving family life going on still. And so, it's wonderful to be able to call mom, to be able to go home and visit, and to do all **that** kind of stuff, and I know she completely **enjoys** it, but it's **never** a big raucous deal.*

D.J.: Mom still lives in Indiana?

> *Rich: Yeah. She lives in the house that I grew up in.*

D.J.: I'll be doggone. Hey, we're gonna play a song in just a little bit about you growing up. We'll play that in just a moment. Can you hang on a second? We're gonna play the song and come back and wrap things up with you, Rich.

> *Rich: Okay.*

D.J.: Rich Mullins is our special guest this morning here on 104.9 FM, WCBW.

(D.J. plays "Boy Like Me, Man Like You".

D.J. (to listeners): Today's Christian radio 104.9 FM, WCBW, Rich Mullins, our special guest this morning here on 104.9 FM.

D.J. (to Rich): It **is** a continual process isn't it, Rich? That we become more and more like Jesus Christ. It doesn't happen overnight, does it?

> *Rich: Yeah, much to everyone's surprise.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) Yeah, it's not instant Jello. It just, it kinda takes some time to set up. And that is **ever** true. One of your latest, one of your new songs, Rich, is "Creed".

> *Rich: Um-hum.*

D.J.: That's what we are playing now as a current song. What's that song all about?

> *Rich: Well, in the last few years, Beaker and I have taken off on... are you there?*

D.J.: I sure am.

> *Rich: Oh, suddenly the phone got **really** quiet, I was going, "Oh no, we've been cut off."*

*In the last few years, we've, Beaker and I have had quite a, I think, spiritual pilgrimage. You know, first of all, moving into reading the Bible for what it **really** says rather than what we **think** it says. Going back and really trying to take a second look at the whole thing, rather than just, when we get to the parts of the Bible that don't make sense to us rather than just glibbing over them, let's really look at that seriously. And that was quite a challenge.*

*Another thing that has happened is, when you're a Christian musician and you travel around from one place to another, and you're involved with all kinds of different "flavors" of Christianity, you're constantly being judged by people, you know? There are... if you go to a Charismatic church and you **don't** speak in tongues, then the people say that you don't have the Holy Spirit. If you go to a fundamentalist church and you **do** speak in tongues, people say that you're demon-possessed, or that you are some kind of emotional ecstatic, or those kinds of things. If you believe in water baptism, you know (he laughs), one group of people will say that that defies the grace of God. If you believe in being saved by faith, then people will say, well, then you're denying the reality of the... blah, blah, blah.*

*You know, everywhere you go, people are **badgering** you to change your beliefs. And one of the things that we both realized, is that, boy, you cannot answer to everybody. And in an attempt to make Christ our Lord even more, we really tried to plug into a local church here in Wichita, which is part of the denomination that I grew up in. And really study what that church believes, and then really try to follow as closely as we can in our own lives, those beliefs.*

*And in the process, what we've done, is gone through and said, "Okay, here are all of the issues that people want to argue about," and "here are all the hot buttons, here is where the controversy lies. What do we believe is really **essential** in Christianity? Where do we think the 'meat and potatoes' of our faith really is?" And what we came up with was **strikingly** like the Apostle's Creed. And our church is a very non-creedal church, we don't recite any creed in our church. And, the church is, in fact, a little **proud** of being non-creedal. But when we looked at what we, together and separately, had said, "Boy, here are the things that we **cannot** compromise on..."*

You know, I don't have to worry too much about what I believe about, say, whether you should tithe, or whether you should give 100%. I don't have to

*worry a whole lot about whether you're allowed to go **out** on Saturday night, or whether you're supposed to stay **in** on Saturday night. These are not things that make or break our faith. "Here are the things that are absolutely essential, and here are things that we can't jimmy on. These are the things that we can't compromise. These are the things that, if we were to lose this, we would no longer have a faith that is genuinely grounded and rooted in historic Christianity."*

And looking at our list, and then looking at the various creeds that the people of the ancient church had come up with, we went, "Wow! It is wonderful and remarkable that the Truth... when you let the dust settle from all the other nit-picky things that people want to spend their lives arguing over, when you let all that settle... the Truth really looks very much the same in the 20th Century as it did in the 1st Century, or whenever the church first began to formally state its beliefs."

*And so we were on a plane, and we were going through The Apostle's Creed. And interestingly enough, both Calvin's Institutes and Karl Barth's Dogmatics really are an examination of the Apostle's Creed. So, two major theologians - one would be a very early one and one would be a fairly recent one - looked at the Creed - at The Apostle's Creed specifically - as being a thing worth looking into. And it's **not** because either of those men or any of **us believe that reciting a creed will save you. I think the value of the Creed is not in the Creed itself, but it's in those things that the Creed gives witness to.***

And, for me, it is wonderfully refreshing to be able to say, "This is what I believe in!" And, because I believe in these things, I have lined myself up, not only with the truth, because those things are true, but I've lined myself up with generations and generations of people who have clung to the same realities. And I'm not alone in my faith, even though I may feel overwhelmed at times, by people who are skeptical, or overwhelmed by people who are, maybe their focus is not here. I am lined up with Augustine. I'm lined up with Calvin. And I'm not a Calvinist, I'm not an Augustinian. But on these issues, which are the central and essential issues of faith, we are all lined up, and boy, that feels good! (Sigh of relief.)

D.J.: It sure does. It's a song that, as they say, you can 'hang your hat on,' I

suppose. You can say, "This is me!" you know, "This is what I believe!" And you've put it to music so well. We're gonna play that in just a moment.

D.J. (to listeners): "Creed," coming up next, by Rich Mullins.

D.J. (To Rich): Rich, we want to thank you, for takin' some time out of your day to share with us here in St. Louis, and we can't wait 'till you get here Saturday for the two shows at 3 and 8 p.m. at the Westport Playhouse.

> ***Rich: Yes, I'm really looking forward to that.***

D.J. (to listeners): All right, Rich Mullins, thanks so much for joining us today, and we will talk to you Saturday. Thanks, Rich.

> ***Rich: Thanks.***

D.J. (to listeners): It's is twenty-eight minutes after 8 o'clock. This is what Rich Mullins believes. It's "Creed" on 104.9 FM.

(D.J. plays "Creed.")

D.J. (to listeners): Today's Christian radio, 104.9 FM, WCBW, Rich Mullins, with 'Creed.' Rich Mullins, our special guest this morning on 104.9 FM, and it was good to talk to him. And uh, he's an interesting fellow.

Transcribed by Robin Woodson

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